

1971

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## Recommended Citation

Pachano, Luisa, "A report on the language instruction provided to a group of deaf children" (1971). *Independent Studies and Capstones*. Paper 244. Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences, Washington University School of Medicine.  
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Luisa E. Pachano  
CID - 1971

A REPORT ON THE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION PROVIDED TO A  
TO A GROUP OF DEAF CHILDREN

This report outlines in a very general way the procedure followed with this group of children over a period of one whole school year. Some specific examples of the steps followed in teaching skills within language modalities are also given; but these represent only a very limited number of the many problems encountered in teaching language across all modalities and in developing the necessary skills within each one. A brief description of the children (as a group) is included, pointing out some of the areas of difficulty that they ~~children~~ exhibit. Educational level is referred to in terms of the language level (competence and performance) that children are actually functioning at; these are outlined following the "Language Outline for Primary" used at Central Institute for the Deaf. In describing the techniques used for teaching, a series of stages are mentioned. It is of importance to note that the sequence in which presented here, is not always kept when teaching. Specific situations may provoke the alteration in order to provide the children with reasonable content (linguistic - syntactic, phonological, etc.) which they can handle with success. One stage does not necessarily precede, preclude or replace the other. In many instances when a child fails to succeed at one level one can move to another; <sup>Ex.</sup> pattern practice is an appropriate stage to use as a starting point when children are failing at the encounter and experience level; because it can easily provide specific and small enough steps or "chunks" of material, in specific modalities and skills within the modalities, where the child builds up positive attitudes (from success) in order to participate <sup>later</sup> in real communication activities. This stage serves as a useful tool, not only in introducing new material but also when moving into contrived communication, where it is likely for children to begin failing and thus get discouraged; by moving back into pattern practice one can provide situations of success that enable the child to approach a higher level where true communication takes place. It is of great importance that the teacher knows when and where to move, along the four stages, as well as how quick she should take the child back to the desired stage. Much attention and time are given to analyze each child's areas of capability and of difficulty (specific deficiencies in language modalities and skills), time is taken with each one in order to know his psychological needs (personality and emotional features: insecurity, frustrations, failures, fears in engaging in verbal activities, etc.). This analysis and also the

teaching <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ performed in terms of observable language behavior. Appreciation of progress is measured along these lines, being ~~completely~~ subjective since unfortunately most achievement, language, reading, articulation tests, etc., only measure improvement when large increments in achievement are made. The achievement tests used measure reading ability (more than anything) and the ceiling is too high; a very large increment in learning is necessary in order to show some increment on the test. These tests do not test along the dimensions in which this particular group of children have been taught; they do not measure or discriminate among language modalities and the skills within them. They give results but do not explain "why"; not diagnostic instruments. Most of the evident aspects of improvement in this group of children, are: changes in attitudes, motivation, interest in learning, pride and pleasure in learning but also a more positive perception of their own persons. Attention has been given in providing them with tools which enable them to compete with others; orientation, towards learning which are each one's areas of ability and of difficulty in terms of modalities and skills, has been given. They have achieved a degree of knowledge of their own limitations (qualitatively and quantitatively), which helps each one in accepting their own and also competing with others through knowledge of the other's areas of limitations (ex. very grossly the children know who is the best lipreader and who the one that always mis-spells, the one who can read better, and the one who has best language; through group dynamics motivation is maintained along these lines so that children are eager to perform either in areas of ability or of difficulty, where now they enjoy being challenged). They can compare themselves with other children in the school in lines of the whole person, but it is frustrating for them when linguistic competence is directly at play. It is of importance to teach these children as a group and not individually. But at the same time it is of great importance to meet the individual needs and approach the child as a whole person rather than a composite of deficiencies or abilities for linguistic purposes (only), since these children have accumulated a long history of failure and frustrations and are finding out, more and more, the difficulties encountered in the learning of language and language skills.

1. Description of the Group:

All of the children have been to, at least, two different schools for the deaf. Schools claim to be oral, even though the competence in this task can be questioned. Total number of children, is: 7. Two of which have been promoted to more advanced classes in the Rotating Dpt. of CID as of fall, and winter of the current year. The age range (chronological): 10 to 14 years. All show average to slightly below average (slow learners), IQ: ranges between 81-115.

All considered severely hearing impaired (60 db ISO and on). All wear hearing aids (monaural). None developed language in a natural way. All (except one child who was diagnosed as mentally retarded) received special education as deaf children since three to five years of age; attention to amplification was given at an early age and oral <sup>lang.</sup> training began around the preschool age. One child was born normal but suffered high fever spell (presumed encephalitis) thredays after birth; folbwing this, deafness was diagnosed at an early age. Has also been under medication for reducing hyperactivity and exhibits general motor incoordination. Another child also shows poor muscular control. One child has been reported to be "upset by conflicts at home"; factor which may influence some of the difficultties he experienced during the first stages of language learning. An important feature is that of a long history of failure in earlier language instruction experienced by eachand all of these children. This in turn has provided <sup>for</sup> the development of a variety of behavioral patterns (defense mechanisms, attention getting mechanisms, aggressiveness, defeat and ~~frustration-level~~ very low (threshold of frustration), and many other features very difficult to detect at times, and more difficult to deal with in educating these children. Another group of characteristics is that of specific areas of difficulty: in language modalities and in skills within them. The seven children present difficulty in different areas, so that matching children (in terms of this) is only possible in a very limited way, by combining, complementing, supplementing, substituting, etc., each one of the modalities and skills through group dynamics. Difficulty in controlling impulses to touch or handle objects, and sometimes persons, when in new overstimulating environment is another feature shown by some; this easily leads them into conflict with the demands for conformity as established by the family, school, and society. The child does not foresee the consequences of his/her behaviour and as a consequence when punished for it, little efficacy does it have; he often ends up not knowing why he was punished, and if realizing the wrongness of his act, punishment is of not much help for prevented future similar situations. Frequently, this child will promise not to do it again, and soon it will be forgotten. This reflects also in school activities where a schedule is to be met; the child is attracted by some "interesting" thing in the hall and will be late for lunch, class, swimming, etc.. Never on time! And consequently, always in trouble!...

Other important considerations when describing these children are, that those ~~children~~ who have had "to experience life for any length of time without the intellectual tools of language, may develop inefficient cognitive strategies. It seems logical to suppose that the language deficient child (what ever the cause of deficiency) may present symptoms with features of reduced proficien-

cy in perception, memory and recall" (F. Kleffner in "Children's Disorders: Re-<sup>Lang.</sup>definition and reinterpretation", 1967). This may account for some of the difficulties exhibited by some of these children.

## 2. Educational Level:

The children are functioning at a Primary Level (Upper) as determined by the CID structure. More specifically, they can speak insentences using hte basic sentence patterns of the language and the simplest variations and modifications that occue within these patterns, as follows:

### 1) Sentence Forms:

#### a) Inverted subject:

There are three fish in the bowl.

#### b) Compound sentences using and, but, so:

The boys played baseball and the girls went shopping.

#### c) Imperative, specially request forms:

Please fix my baseball glove.

### 2) Verbs and Verb Tenses:

#### a) To have, to be, to like, to want, etc.; in past, present, future, affirmative, negative, interrogative.

#### b) Action verbs: present progressive is introduced; past progressive given only for encounter when needed - not required. Habitual present only given for comprehension and absorption (encounter level) not formally presented this year.

Action verbs followed by closely associated adverb, preposition, or other part of speech. Complete phrase treated as verb. Ex. pick up, to take off.

Other verbs and verb distinctions that deaf children find difficult.

Common contractions (e.g. I'm, It's, etc.).

### 3) "When" phrases and clauses:

Conscious control over the rules for expressing day, month, and year.

on May 27                      in May                      in 1971

on Tuesday                      in Spring

Use of "before" and "after" in phrases:

after lunch  
before school

"When" clauses given formally this year:

When I was a little boy I went to England.

I had measles when I was three years old.

### 4) "Where" expressions:

#### a) Place "to which" after go and other verbs of movement.

go home                      go to art                      go to the park

- b) Place "where" after to be, to play, etc. using correct preposition for various nouns.

in or at home                      in the park                      on the roof  
in or on the street

- c) Other prepositions carrying specific meanings:

under, below, underneath  
over, above  
along, across  
through, etc.

5) Other verbal elements and associated questions:

- a) Expressing reason, purpose, cause:

I took off my sweater because I was hot.

- b) Expressing with, for, and from whom:

We went with Mrs. Garrett.

I got a letter from my brother.

- c) Expressing how long; given more at the encounter level.

We waited for a long time.

- d) Expressing means:

Mark cut his finger with a knife.

6) Noun categories and associated language principles:

Correct use of count nouns (singular and plural) and mass nouns and associated pronouns, determiners, and question words. How many versus how much.

7) Articles and article substitutes<sup>t</sup> (determiners):

a versus an

a boy versus (two, some, lots of, etc.) boys

some milk versus the milk

8) Personal and Reflexive Pronouns:

All subject and object forms (especially us and them).

Possessives before nouns.

Mine, yours, his, hers, standing alone.

9) Adjective modifiers: before nouns, adjective phrases and clauses.

10) Noun clauses and a beginning on indirect discourse:

Clauses are almost all kept at the encounter level; very little has been done formally.

11) Questions:

Short answers for meaning and use of correct phrase.

Long answers for sentence structure.

3. Techniques used in teaching:

I - Encounters with communication:

Expecting the development of an awareness of communication. These encounters are provided continually taking advantage of all situations and experiences that come up and which are meaningful for the children. In many instances the teacher purposefully creates interesting situations in order to present language that falls within the framework of a "long term language plan" developed at the beginning of the school year. This way she can maintain a clear direction in teaching and avoid dispersion. Short term planning (weekly and daily) as well as weekly evaluations also help a great deal organization of content material and stages of development of specific skills.

At this stage the minimal outcome desired for the child is his development of an awareness of communication. In achieving this, special attention must be paid to the individual needs in terms of the child's psychology and specific deficiencies within specific language modalities. That is to say, that encounters should be geared to the group but with much attention to difficulties in lipreading, reading, etc. It is not teaching on an individual basis. Instead, it is making sure that language is presented orally and in writing and that each child is adequately reached (participates); in other words, it may be necessary to develop awareness of communication, a feel for language by emphasizing as much as needed all language modalities.

At this stage the children are not required to generate language; rather they are expected to get a feel for it, some understanding (or improvement of) the experience along with the language necessary to order it, classify, store, etc. They should participate in the activity but can act as an spectator in relation to the language presented by the teacher.

II - Experience with communication in meaningful context:

Expecting participation in communication in meaningful context.

Experience, for the group, is provided in order to teach specific language principles and structures (sentence forms, questions and answers, verbs and verb tenses, etc.). The teaching of language to this group of children is done according to the approach used in the Primary and Rotating Departments at CID. They are taught as other deaf children, differing only in the class management; since these children require much more attention to their specific areas of difficulty (communication skills, attitude, etc.). Careful guidance in skill training within each language

modality must be given. The same orientation follows in the generalization process of phonologic, syntactic, semantic, etc. rules. Presentation of language principles must follow a carefully delineated procedure in order to make the learning task an enjoyable, clear and easy as possible one; thus assuring success for all the children. Step by-step teaching is required; not implying with this, sound-by-sound, or word-by-word teaching. It must proceed slower than for other deaf children, increasing the difficulty of the language presented, by very small increments across all modalities. Time is taken towards checking and re-checking comprehension for items taught. Careful analysis of modality difficulties and specific skill deficiencies is done, when a child's response is inadequate; it is of great importance to know at which level the child is failing in order to lead him into full participation of the language experience. In other words, determine whether the problem is in grasping ideas, language for the experience, lipreading, reading or even attention. Presentation of language principles has to be given through various modalities: orally, reading, etc.; only one modality is not enough to assure that the concept has reached all the children. Rounds must be made in securing comprehension in terms of individual needs. Systematic, very orderly teaching of language structures (sentence patterns, variations and modifications that occur within the patterns) is followed with the aid of the "Fitzgerald Key" to aid in ordering language. Experiences in communication, at this stage, are more contrived and explicit. They can be accompanied by language provided by the teacher. In some instances children are capable of generating language expressing the ideas and concepts pertaining to the experience; in this situation the teacher accepts this language and in straightening it out provides the new principles intended. These are good opportunities to give a feel for semantics if one can manage to use the child's contribution. The teacher may need to put words into the child's mouth; that is to say, that as they live each specific experience (geared towards the expansion of his linguistic competence), the teacher provides the language that should naturally accompany it. This language should be given in a way that might serve the child for giving order and unity to the experience. This language should be appropriate, in quality and quantity, in order to challenge but not overwhelm him, and should be presented in a way that meets individual needs (areas of ability and difficulty: lipreading, reading, speech, writing, etc.). Again much attention is given to the psychological aspects of the individuals: personality, threshold of frustration,



insecurity, failures, etc.; and again also we work on the basis of observable behaviour.

### III - Pattern Practice:

Expecting derivations of rules (phonologic, syntactic, semantic, etc.) and development of skills (reading, writing, speech, etc.).

At this stage formal drills for providing practice in the patterns of rules and structures of language (phonol, synt., etc.), take place. The children should begin to derive rules by which language operates and they must begin to develop skills within the specific modalities. At this level, maybe more than in any other, the individual needs must be met; abilities and specific areas of difficulty should be handled effectively so that children are always motivated and have opportunities to meet success. Group dynamics is one of the major crutches that can be used for teaching in any one level. The group situation is indispensable for providing opportunities to compete with others only as long as the teacher handles it successfully ; this competency can be conceived in terms of minimizing, as much as possible, failures and defeat, but where the child is also functioning to the maximum of his ability. with positive attitude. Language content must be presented in all modalities; drills have to cover all modalities and skills. Rounds can be made for each modality or skill and also emphasizing the particular skill or modality most needed for each child (e.g. instead of making a round only for drilling speech, reading, writing, etc., have each child perform in the area he needs most (in terms of ability or difficulty) and this way work through the language principle across modality in a group situation). Sometimes there is no <sup>advantage</sup> need to have each child go through repetitive practice of the one modality or skill. It might take away the fluency of the class, provoke boredom, slow down the process and as consequence motivation and attention will decrease. When it becomes obvious that procedures at the encounter and experience stage are not producing results, moving into pattern practice will probably be effective. Through pattern practice it is fairly easy for the teacher to help the child succeed and thus become capable of participation in limited but true communication activities. It is in this stage that the teacher should provide each child with the necessary practice in each modality and with emphasis on the skills which he needs most. Sufficient practice in terms of quality and quantity need be given to each in group activities. There are situations where a child

might need more individual work; this can be worked in the daily schedule while providing seat work. It is also useful to move into pattern practice when the child is failing in any other stage and for dealing with new language structures or other that is being reviewed. Most skills (eithin specific modalities) have to be carefully taught and drilled; more often does the teacher have to lead the child along the whole path of development of some of these skills (writing, speech, lipreading, etc.). It is specially needed because these children have failed so often that negative attitudes toward communication tasks (oral and written) have developed. Negativism in engaging in verbal activities and specifically in reading and writing (different to copying) is most obvious and frequent. In some instances it is neccessary to brake language tasks as specifically and to very limited activities as can be, work at the phonological level in order to move into syntax, or small segments of a sentence in order to approach reading (e.g. words, phrases, then ultimately present a very simple sentence and proceed from there to groups of sentences to small paragraphs, etc.). \*

#### IV - Contrived Communication:

Expecting generative performance from the children; this refers to the child's application of learned rules and skills in new and previously untried ways, both in interpreting and in formulating sentences.

The teacher provides contrived communication interactions which should lead the children to generative performance. One important class period dedicated for this purpose is that of news, daily at the beginning of the class period. This is complemented with letter writing for written performance. Again, a device used for straightening out the children's language, for both oral and written activities, is the Fitzgerald Key; care is taken in order to keep the patterns given <sup>closely</sup> <sup>meaningful</sup> related to experiences so that they are always functional or operational. Again, if the child begins to fail much moving to another stage might be most appropriate.

#### \* Note continuing stage III:

Some of the devices used at this stage, in the process of pinpointing the language principles and structures taught, are: a) the Fitzgerald Key, b) a variety of charts that aid in developing and masterign of phonologic, syntactic rules, etc. - these are kept as reminders, c) note-

books which the children use a personal long term recording devices; here most of the language principles taught are recorded by categories (questions, partitives, verbs, etc.), speech and spelling word lists are also recorded as well as any other material that has presented difficulty for the children. The children use this type of device as reference during class periods, for homework and for summer reference, as needed (e.g. in answering questions, looking up verbs for the correct tense, spelling &/or speech of words, etc.).

Some examples of the steps followed in order to meet individual needs, in teaching specific skills within language modalities:

Writing: for most of the children much guidance has been needed. Exercises oriented to handwriting were followed step-by-step for good quality rather than quantity: shapes of letters, sizes, etc. Orientation was also given for placing the name and date in a particular distribution on the paper. Each step was followed by another in a systematic way day after day. The children needed directions for correct spacing also. When beginning a task it had to be designed in such a way that they would wait for the teachers instructions before engaging in the writing task. More often this was done in order to minimize the probability of failure, since failure after failure would quickly fall into frustration and along with it all kinds of negative attitudes would arise.

After a period of two years with this type of systematic procedure two children often make mistakes and tend to get discouraged with results of decreased quality of the content (language or handwriting practice) of the task. In order to work on the shape of letters, well lined paper was needed; this was especially designed for them. At the beginning letters were large in size until proficiency was acquired and they could start moving into smaller patterns. Practice was given towards developing perception of the individual letters, then tying them together (first two, then three, etc.); keeping in mind to begin with those patterns that were easier. Later, work was done towards developing print, and being able to transcribe from print to cursive writing.

Reading: two children had special difficulty with reading; the origin of the problem is not easily defined. Their attitude in relation to written language was not only negative (not wanting to approach it) but mixed with various misbehavior type of reactions. To deal with this whole situation the reading

task was broken down into very simple activities which the children could handle. They were afraid of seeing much written material together; so we started by approaching one syllable words, and going through all of the modalities and working on all of the skills. This was geared specially towards building positive attitudes and <sup>to</sup> avoid having the child feel that he had to deal with large quantities of written language. Day by day few new words were taught, and carefully and thoroughly drilled (in all modalities) until children felt secure because they could "tackle" each word in every way with success. Immediately as more positive attitudes started to arise sentence patterns were given and slowly larger and larger contexts were introduced and worked on. Care was taken in order to prevent failing so tasks were kept fairly simple until children were not afraid to approach reading and /or writing. Language was taught across modalities (in all stages) providing in this way encounters with written language through out the day and being careful of building up attitudes at all times.

One child has particularly made improvements in terms of reading ability and this is reflected directly through his interest in reading books, adding new language that he brings to school daily (and can be inferred that it was picked up through reading). Nevertheless he is still at a very elementary stage. Now he approaches reading positively and is also eager to express himself through writing (letters) something which he would reject to do last year. Sometimes he <sup>not able</sup> seems to read a well known word (orally: uses it appropriately, understands it, has even read it before). In this case if "sounding it out" with careful correct speech, he frequently gets the meaning without requiring any other additional cues (pictures, context, teacher's help, etc.).

Spelling: most of the children have shown deficiency in this skill. A task that was followed was, to <sup>o</sup>break it up into segments (keeping the word on the same line of the paper, or in diagonal steps); the child's task was to see the word, turn around and reproduce it. Step-by-step was followed until the word was not broken up into segments, and then even longer words could be worked on. This area was of special difficulty for the attitudes of the children were as negative as with reading. When success is met, it reflects almost immediately and directly in all their performance (across modalities).

#### Language structures:

In building up sentence patterns, even if very simple ones it seems that one major interference is a lack of appreciation for sequences; this also holds true or reflects in the sequencing of letters or sounds within a word. The

Sequencing, organizing structures, etc. seems not to be of importance to these children and consequently much difficulty is met in syntactic structuring. Pattern practice is a stage where frequently one has to move into in order to provide enough repetitive practice in language structuring. Nevertheless, most of the children continue to omit words and alter word order within sentences. This area is one where not much improvement seems to be made.

Lipreading:

Work with individual movements and groups of movements has been done, associating these with cursive writing and the Northampton Chart (another way to provide practice in various skills), and also with the speech for those sounds and combinations of sounds. Another type of work done geared towards improvement in this area was using short stories where the topic would meet situations most likely to be of use for them in everyday life (e.g. baseball, going to the gas station, shopping, accidents, etc.); the procedure followed was to give clue words and then the story written for further work with yes-no questions, multiple choice, etc. Clue words were given through lipreading associating this with the printed word, then given the story (lipreading) then read the story, and finally the procedure for questions, yes-no statements, etc.

Comments:

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